

EATS

Trolley Stop is on track with good, cheap food

By KATHRYN HIGHAM
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

There are people who would never consider going to the Trolley Stop, a rustic eatery on the edge of historic Ellicott City. Some might get as far as the cigarette haze at the bar, take a look at the year-round Christmas decorations and the rough wooden floors, and decide the Trolley Stop is not for them.

They wouldn't even have to know this place was once a biker's bar with a bad reputation, a place so notorious for violent brawls that it was nicknamed the Bloody Bucket.

That was before Joe Morea bought the 19th-century tavern in 1981 and started focusing more on food than drink. A few locals can still be found at the bar, but people now come mainly to eat, filling in for nightly specials, like the \$9.95 lobster on Tuesday nights.

"Cheap eats," is the reason, says Mary Fields, who manages the restaurant with her brother, John, and father, Bob. The food here isn't just cheap, though. It's remarkably good, and so is the service. Our waitress managed to be funny, smart, efficient and full of helpful information.

One of the best things she recommended was the thick



LINDA COAN : SUN STAFF

Rustic: The Trolley Stop retains the look of the 19th century tavern it once was.

turkey and Swiss cheese sandwich grilled on rounds of sourdough bread. The thinly sliced turkey breast was freshly roasted and moist, accented with honey mustard for a touch of sweetness. Served with pickle chips and a tumble of golden fries, this sandwich was a bargain at \$4.25.

The crab cake platter, another of the waitress' picks, featured a small, firm crab cake, with

more filler than die-hard crab-cake connoisseurs would like, but with enough backfin lumps to compensate. It was served with a salad and baked potato for \$9.95.

Platters and sandwiches make up most of the regular menu, with different entrees, sandwiches and often appetizers on the specials list each day.

We tried the Cajun-blackened New York strip steak

(\$11.95), which was juicy and flavorful under a thick coating of fiery spices; a half-pound of plump shrimp (\$3.95), cooked perfectly with crab spice; and pasta shells stuffed with tender morsels of sea scallops, shrimp and crab meat (\$12.95). The seafood was fine, but the sauce the menu described as "lobster cream" tasted a lot like the creamy seafood soup we had for starters.

The Trolley Stop

6 Oella Ave., Ellicott City
410-465-8546

Hours: Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner

Credit cards: MasterCard, Visa

Prices: Appetizers, \$1.50-\$5.95; entrees, \$5.50-\$11.95

Food: ***

Service: ***1/2

Atmosphere: **

Ratings system: Outstanding: ****; Good ***; Fair or uneven **; Poor *

As a soup, it was quite good — creamy without being too thick with bits of crab, chopped clam and shrimp. Crunchy, crusty coated jalapeno poppers filled with cream cheese, and a Caesar salad with a homemade dressing full of anchovy bits and slivers of Parmesan were our other appetizers.

Individual tubs of not-quite butter and fake plants are as much a part of the Trolley Stop's charm as the exposed beams of Tennessee black oak and the homey desserts baked daily by a local woman and brought in fresh each afternoon.

Be sure to try at least one dessert.